WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of retrieving or updating system status for a computer, the method comprising the acts of:

sending a command for remotely retrieving or updating system status from a second computer through a remote interface to a first computer;

executing the command on a microcontroller in the first computer; and

sending a retrieve or update system status signal from the microcontroller to the first computer thereby retrieving or updating the system status.

2. The method of Claim 1, additionally including the act of providing power to the remote interface from a remote interface power supply independent of a first computer power supply.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the second computer is at the same location as the first computer.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the second computer is at a location remote to the first computer.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein the act of sending the remotely retrieving or updating system status command from the second computer includes the act of connecting a pair of modems, wherein a first modem connects to the first computer and a second modem connects to the second computer.

6. The method of Claim 1, further including the act of providing a response to the second computer through the remote interface based on results of the command.

7. A method of retrieving or updating system status for a computer, the method comprising the acts of:

connecting a remote interface to a first computer and a second computer;

providing a retrieving or updating system status command at the second computer directed to the first computer;

encapsulating the command in a communications protocol;

transmitting the encapsulated command to the remote interface;

communicating the command received by the remote interface to the first computer; and

performing the command on the first computer.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the act of performing the command includes the act of establishing a secure mode in the computer environment.

9. The method of Claim 7, wherein the act of performing the command includes the act of sending data to a component of the first computer.

10. The method of Claim 7, wherein the act of performing the command includes the act of requesting data from a component of the first computer.

11. The method of Claim 7, wherein the act of communicating the command includes the act of storing command data in a memory associated with the remote interface.

12. The method of Claim 7, further including the act of providing a response to the second computer through the remote interface based on results of the command.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the act of providing a response includes the act of storing response data in a memory associated with the remote interface.

14. A method of external management of a computer environment, the method comprising the acts of:

providing a first computer;

providing a second computer;

selecting, at the second computer, a component of the first computer to be managed;

5   selecting, at the second computer, a management operation to be performed by the first computer on the selected component;

communicating the selected component and selected operation from the second computer to the first computer; and

performing the selected operation on the selected component at the first

10   computer.

15.   The method of Claim 14, further including the act of providing a response to the second computer based on the results of the selected operation.

15   16.   The method of Claim 15, further including the act of displaying the response to a user at the second computer.